MEDITATIONS OF A YOUNG MAN

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1914

GAGE OLCOTT

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Gage Olcott

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BY

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FOREWORD

THE habit of meditation belongs to age rather than youth, and to women more than men. The young man of to-day — if he has good red blood in his veins — is eager to succeed in his chosen calling, to be well informed on all the subjects of current interest, and to take an active part in the various recreations and amusements that appeal to his nature. His hours of work are spent in contact with men of affairs, whose talk is of business. His hours of leisure are passed in the company of young people, where good fellowship and the lighter topics of society leave little chance for deeper reflections.

It is natural, therefore, to express a

feeling of surprise when we find a young man of this type, full of the joys of living, devoting serious thought to the deep underlying questions involved in the spiritual nature of mankind and the future life.

My son, Gage, who was called to enter the larger life in the twenty-seventh year of his age, was a young man of peculiarly happy disposition. He was tall, well-built, fond of athletics, and possessed of excellent health. No one ever enjoyed witnessing a game of football, baseball, or hockey, more than he. A loyal Princetonian and a graduate of the Class of 1909, he joyously attended the class reunions. He worked industriously at his business and incidentally studied the problems of banking and currency which it suggested. Always fond of his home, he looked forward to the time

when he should be happily married and have a home of his own. He would have made an ideal father, for children instinctively loved him. His buoyant nature was such that only those who were nearest to him knew that he cared to ponder upon the deeper subjects of life.

His parents knew that he was in the habit of writing at intervals in a small memorandum book. He mentioned it to no one, never offered to read extracts from it, and his mother, who had seen the book in his desk, respected his privacy and did not read it.

The contents of this book were, therefore, known only to its author until the 12th day of March, 1914. We had said farewell to the earthly form of our boy in the morning of that day, and after returning from Mount Auburn, the family

gathered in the room where we had so often felt the joy of his presence. The little book was reverently taken from his desk and again our son was with us. Not the laughing, joking, pleasure-loving boy of yesterday, but the man of mature mind, whose deeper nature was revealed in the meditations which he had written only to express his own thought to himself. Beneath his outward joyousness was a thoughtful reserve, the existence of which we knew, though we had never sounded its depths. With no fear that other eyes would penetrate the sanctuary of his inner soul, he wrote precisely what was in his mind.

As we read the pages of this book, now suddenly become precious to us, we seemed to hear the voice of our beloved speaking from his heart of hearts out of Eternity. Since then I have been per-

suaded by friends who have seen the papers that I ought to let this voice speak to other young men, that they, too, may be inspired, perhaps, to think of the same subjects and to record their thoughts.

The papers here given are selected from the diary as the ones most likely to prove of permanent interest. Interspersed with them, but not here included, were discussions of the current affairs of the day, the tariff and currency legislation, the trusts, the Mexican war, the Japanese situation, etc., and one humorous story.

The original diary contains no subheadings, and the divisions are marked only by the dates when they were written. I have supplied titles, for the sake of convenience, but otherwise the articles are printed as they were writ-

ten. I have ventured to give them the general title, "Meditations of a Young Man."

CHARLES S. OLCOTT.

MARCH, 1914.

CONTENTS

Hope 1

The Certainty of the Coming of Spring . 4

The Essence of Spirituality 9

The Purpose of Life 13

Imagination 17

Large Questions and Small Minds . . 27

Woman 31

Self-Control 34

Self-Esteem 39

National Character as revealed by the Newspapers 45

The Divine Spark 47

Immortality 52

The Panorama of our Thoughts . . . 56

The Spirit's Form 61

The Universe of the Mind 64

MEDITATIONS OF A YOUNG MAN

HOPE

A YEAR ago yesterday, the papers were filled with the news of the Titanic, but with the exception of a few articles and editorials, the anniversary of this terrible catastrophe has passed almost unnoticed. This shows plainly how quickly we forget even the most harrowing happenings, and that it only takes time to efface from the mind the thought of past sorrows and sufferings. One of the factors which make this possible, and, indeed, the customary thing, is the deeply planted spring of

hope which is in humanity the world over, so that we are caused unconsciously to focus our thoughts on the future and to believe sincerely that an improved state of things will surely come to us eventually. The hope within us is the one thing which makes the present uncomfortable state of existence bearable.

In the hour of sorrow, or in the hour of defeat, there is a little spark of feeling deep within which makes us feel that we have not yet reached the end of things and that there is really no such thing as despair, but that we have the power within ourselves to rally and surmount the climax of darkness that surrounds us. That little ray of sunshine penetrates the deep gloom, and we eagerly seize upon it and are cheered to meet all obstacles or misfortunes which come

upon us, because it convinces us of a great, broad, and beautiful future that must finally be ours.

APRIL 15, 1913.

THE CERTAINTY OF THE COMING OF SPRING

UP to date April has been March. We have had none of those warm, balmy spring mornings which are usually ushered in at about this time of year. It has been windy and cold, the wind consistently in the northwest. Strange to say, the entire winter through which we have just passed produced but one or two days during which the wind blew from that quarter, which is to say the present winter has been an exceedingly open one, with the natural result of a cold and probably long-delayed spring. Nature distributes the same general average of heat and cold throughout the years, but she is neither methodical nor

exact in her dealings. Thus are we relieved of a deadly monotony, the results of which we can easily conceive as having a most disheartening effect on our spirits and general temperaments.

In a few weeks, however, spring will be here in all her glory. There is considerable food for thought in our certainty of that prophecy. We know it is true because our experience in years which have passed has been a constant and invariable witness to that truth. We have always watched the buds begin to open, and eagerly sniffed the delightful, soft air every year at about this time, and the experience has implanted itself within our subconsciousness. Thus in February we say, "Spring is not a long way off," even though at the moment we are breasting a wild, wintry storm. This conclusion, then, is satisfactory enough, as

a logical deduction reached from a premise founded on a general truth, which we have found to exist and in which we thoroughly believe, because of our personal experience, which has never varied throughout the years. Personal experience is not sufficient, however. The number of years which we have on this earth is altogether too small for us to form any judgments or conclusions from what we have personally observed, which could by any possibility be infallible. An uneducated or illiterate person always forms the most fantastic and inaccurate ideas regarding the natural phenomena of nature. And yet such a person is simply giving expression to thoughts which have resulted from personal observation. He, too, would be certain of spring's approach because of his share in the common experience, but

this would be the only reason he could assign. To find a real basis for believing so thoroughly in this prophecy of spring, we are forced to view the matter from a scientific standpoint, and to understand the laws of nature which govern the seasons through investigating the working of the factors which influence them most directly. In other words, it is essential to understand that the universe conforms to certain fundamental laws, which are uniform and unchangeable. As soon as we learn that nature's laws are unchangeable and eternal, then we have a basis for accurately computing their probable effect throughout the universe, as we gradually acquire the necessary data. The one essential is to realize the invariability of natural laws. This alone is a sufficient basis to explain the change in seasons. The great mass of

scientific detail necessary to make it clear is simply a secondary consideration. It is this knowledge of the great fundamental laws governing the world, which must be added to our personal experience, before we can be absolutely certain when we say, "Spring is coming." It is true that these laws of nature have become known to man through personal observation and experience, but they represent the long, arduous research and struggle of thousands and thousands of men throughout countless centuries, as they bent all the force of intelligence and will into lifting the veil of nature. Our own individual experience is nothing. The experience of all mankind is everything, because it has opened the door to nature, and handed us the key.

APRIL 21, 1913.

THE ESSENCE OF SPIRITUALITY

STROLLING down Washington Street the other night I was suddenly brought to a pause by the distant sound of an approaching band. In a few moments the music was upon me and the great stirring notes of the "Marseillaise" arose on the air. Behind the band marched a motley throng of men and women, singing wildly and lustily, and gayly waving variously colored flags and pennants, principally red. The parade was evidently a Socialist demonstration of some sort, but the important point of it all was the tremendous earnestness manifested. Those men and women cheered and sang with deep feeling, while

that thrilling march of the old French Revolutionary days aroused the emotion of all who listened, whatsoever might be their sympathies with the cause for which it was playing. Which goes to prove that the real emotions and spirit of mankind are essentially the same at all times. Human nature is the same all over the globe, with like capabilities for being aroused by what is greater or finer than itself. In other words, humanity has within itself a divine essence of spirituality, which lies latent and deep down in the heart, but which is quickly aroused into expression by a genuine appeal. Individually, humanity does not dream of the richness of its spiritual possessions. Collectively, it reveals them time and time again under the stress of certain circumstances. The great parade of laboring-men represented a class of men who are not rea-

soners, nor worthy of the slightest claim to be called thinking men, but their deeper-seated emotions were stirred into passion by the soul-thrilling notes of the "Marseillaise," and for the time being they were the oppressed and down-trodden masses, asserting their divine inheritance, as men destined to freedom and equality with their oppressors. The spirit was aroused to action by the march, and revealed that at heart these men were in no sense different from the mob who stormed the Bastille, nor, at an earlier date, from our own little army which fought for its rights at Yorktown. These Socialists felt instinctively that they were giving expression to their convictions, that they were mistreated by their employers, and that society as now constituted was radically wrong. They had no remedy to offer of a practical na-

ture, and probably few of them could reason out the exact terms of their grievances, and how society should be properly adjusted. But their emotions were aroused, and the latent spirit of mankind was revealed in them, as the majestic tones of the grand old song arose on high, for they believed they were marching on to a higher and a better state of living.

MAY 4, 1913.

THE PURPOSE OF LIFE

THE question of man's purpose in life is an ever-recurring one. There have been any number of theories expressed, but to my mind they all sift down into two fundamental propositions. The first is that a man is placed on the earth for the one purpose of developing his own character to the highest possible point, mentally, morally, and spiritually; that the ultimate destiny of mankind is perfection; and that the duty of the individual is to realize the fact by devoting his life to personal striving for that great goal. The other theory states that self-sacrifice and lifelong devotion to the needs of society, or the public welfare, are the essentials of life. In other words, no man

can realize his highest inherent capabilities and really justify his existence on earth, unless he forget self entirely and devote all his powers and thoughts to public service.

At first sight these two views of the question appear to be contradictory, if not antagonistic. For how can a man develop himself to the best of his ability, and at the same time put aside thoughts of self? And yet in each theory there seems to be a vital truth. Is it possible to reconcile the two ideas, or must we recognize one of them as best expressing our own belief and discard the other? In my opinion it is possible to establish the former position. These two theories of life appear to be mutually exclusive, but if we are to understand the true meaning underlying them, we must take them conjointly, the one explaining the

other. In this way we shall find that, taken together, they express a great and profound truth which is closer by far to realism than is approached by either taken by itself.

In order that a man may devote himself to the service of humanity, he must necessarily prepare himself for that life, that he may have something of genuine value to give. If he has nothing of value to give society, then his announcement of devoting himself to its welfare is empty banality and not to be taken seriously. If, on the other hand, his greatest ambition and purpose is to prepare himself by all the means at his command to be fitted for his ideal of service to humanity, then he will have a definite personal value to society. Therefore, he must develop himself intellectually and morally as a preparatory step to the real purpose

of his life, the consummation of his spiritual nature by giving himself to others in a service of love and self-sacrifice. And just as we find it necessary for him to develop himself in this way as a preliminary essential to his future, so do we find that in his life of devotion to other interests than his own, he is unconsciously increasing his personal development of character along all the lines demanded by the first theory advanced. And so are the two theories in reality one, both necessary to the greater truth which lies beneath them, and to which they simply give expression, that the best there is in man comes out when he realizes his spiritual nature and makes the profound purpose of his life to follow its dictates.

MAY 7, 1913.

IMAGINATION

WITHOUT imagination life must be very prosaic and uninteresting. The man who accepts things as they are and plods along day after day in the same old routine must find living a pretty dull affair. Such a person probably often expresses dissatisfaction with the world and the people in it, while wondering why he was ever born. To be bored with one's self, and to feel bored by others, is simply an evidence of lack of imagination, or else disinclination to make any use of that marvelously rich endowment of the faculties. For example, I can pass a most uneventful and dull afternoon in taking a trip to Nantasket. I can board the little harbor steamer, sit

within and peruse a newspaper all the way to Pemberton. At that point I can arise and walk out with the crowd to the waiting electric cars, which wend their way by the seashore the rest of the route. The journey can be uninteresting to a degree if I choose to make it so, by remaining in a passive, non-thinking state of mind; I can merely contemplate my fellow passengers indifferently, and listlessly glance at the harbor with unseeing eyes, observe the great sweep of the ocean perfunctorily, and simply move with the crowd as one among many, a human piece of driftwood.

On the other hand, presuming I possess an imagination, I am instantly alert as I select a well-chosen point of vantage on the forward deck. I have no time for newspapers. I am taking in all of the harbor that I can see, with one long in-

tense glance. I note, to the left, a small United States gunboat, and observe a tiny dory made fast to her cable chain. I surmise she is used in conveying the bluecoats to shore, and I wonder at what times they are permitted shore leave. I am constrained to speculate on the life of the marine, and whether or not I should care to enter that service. Thoughts of long voyages to far-distant ports fill my mind, and a subsequent idea flashes before my eyes, of what place that little gunboat would have in the event of war. I watch great flocks of sea gulls and I am absorbed in wondering contemplation of their graceful flight, resembling, as they soar, the modern monoplane.

As we sail farther down the harbor I suddenly become a great hero. There is a cry from the aft side of the boat, a

shrieking woman pointing blindly down into the great wave formed as we plough along, which follows us relentlessly. Here, in the surging foam and spray, I see a little red object cast about roughly by the waves and rapidly disappearing in the distance. In an instant my coat is off, my hat thrown on the deck, and I am taking a mighty dive into the dark, rushing waters. With a few powerful strokes I reach the object just as it sinks beneath the surface. Undismayed I take a deep breath and swim down, head first; with my eyes open and strained madly. I see the object, grasp it just as I am about to choke for want of air, and bring it up to the surface with me. Gasping for breath, I struggle with the waves, making more secure my grasp of the little helpless girl whom I perceive I have rescued in the very nick of time. Fighting my way

blindly, I swim in the general direction of the boat, which I note has slowed down and is coming to a stop. I hear great shouting and apparently much confusion among those on board. I dimly see a mass of gesticulating men and women crowded over the port rail and am conscious of a tremendous excitement in the air. Gradually I force my way through the heavy ground swell, and in great exhaustion, but still firmly clutching my precious burden, I reach the side of the vessel. After this point I remember nothing. I awake, lying on a clean white cot in a cabin under the forward deck, and am greatly astonished by the number of persons standing in the room and staring at me curiously.

And so I day-dream further and further on, until unconsciously I am become a most frightful egotist and

scarcely realize how absurd and impossible my visions of myself have become. For the time being, however, I have enjoyed myself hugely, because I have flown on the wings of fancy and have been unburdened by the sternly admonishing voice of reason and common sense. You see, by the time I reach Pemberton, I have had a thrilling adventure in which I alone have played the central rôle. I have been a hero and have received the unqualified admiration and homage of all the multitude. Of course it is childish and impossible, and I should under no circumstances dream of relating my flight of fancy to a cold, indifferent outsider. I believe, however, that there are others who have pictured themselves in the rôle of the heroic. It is only natural to believe ourselves capable of the greatest and most splendid

achievements, and consequently a sympathetic imagination portrays us willingly as really accomplishing our secret ambitions to shine illustriously in the heaven of the heroic. If we allow a free rein to imagination, we are masters of the universe.

The great drawback to this innocent little pleasure is, of course, the final descending to earth, and the rather vacant feeling that we have, after all, only wasted valuable time. This is due primarily to the vivid contrast between the world of the imagination and the world of reality. The cut-and-dried and commonplace actualities of the visible seem to shock the senses, after we have been soaring in a delightful infinity of wonderful possibilities. At the same time we realize our life must be lived among the actualities, and not among the possibili-

ties. Hence we are impressed with a sense of futility and our common sense chides us with wasting our time. Yet we value the imagination as one of our greatest faculties. And it is a man's greatest asset. The one necessity is to place upon it a certain restraint, that of reason and common sense, — else would we be silly dreamers and of no real worth in the world.

The great men of history have all been gifted with unusually fine imagination. In planning campaigns, Napoleon made a limitless use of that faculty, possessing an insight and vision of depth and breadth surpassed by none. George Washington pictured a mighty nation on this side of the water, free and prosperous, and independent of all other nations. He saw this vision at the time of the Boston Tea-Party, when few, if any, of

his fellow countrymen really believed the colonies would ever be severed from the mother country. And so with Lincoln, as he viewed the menacing and sinister growth of slavery in the South. By the aid of his imagination he saw the ugly ulcer on our national life grow to prodigious proportions and permeate the country with all its wretched misery and suffering, inflicting its cruel injustice upon the negro and leaving the white man hard and callous. Further than that, he saw before his mind's eye a nation torn asunder by dissension and distrust as a result of the growing evil. In our own time we have an example of the tremendous power of a trained imagination, backed by an indomitable will power, in the person of Edison. A dreamer who makes his marvelous dreams come true, is Edison. It is difficult to comprehend

the tremendous scope of his exceedingly fertile mind, but we can at least realize the great force of his imagination. The results speak for themselves. They are visualized dreams, realities constructed from immaterial thought.

And so, after all, we find that the dull, commonplace realities of life are made vitally interesting and worth while if we look at them through the spectacles of imagination. Our afternoon is an enjoyable affair if we follow fancy where she leads, tempering too great an exuberance by judicious common sense. And best of all, we firmly believe in the strength and power of that faculty to aid us in our onward march through life; and we know that, without imagination, man is verily nothing.

MAY 13, 1913.

LARGE QUESTIONS AND SMALL MINDS

THERE are problems which assume an aspect of tremendous importance before the mind's eye simply because they are close at hand and pressing. If we possessed greater brain capacity and a broader vision, such questions would sink into relative inconsequentiality. We should then judge them more accurately and justly, because of our decision being made dispassionately. The great difficulty is, of course, to view the problem impersonally, reducing it to its proper position in relation to other questions and to its true importance as a subject of vital interest. To view the problem from a broad, far-seeing view-

point, we must first eliminate self. Our own immediate concern predominates in our first view of the matter, which is simply the cropping-out of the oldest of all instincts in human nature, that of self-preservation. This more or less selfish concern must be brushed aside, or we shall be quite unable to form an impartial and unprejudiced judgment uninfluenced by thoughts of self-interest. Looking at the matter in an unbiased and dispassionate manner, we shall then be more able to exercise our cooler reasoning powers and calm thinking faculties in arriving at a decision. The relative importance of the subject under consideration would, of course, vary with every man who gave it thought. The point is, that it would assume proportions in accordance with the size of the brain engaged upon it. The deep thinker of

broad sympathies, possessing wide intellectual experience and insight, would at once see the problem in its proper relationship to society and so pass judgment. The small mind, however, would see it only from one viewpoint, that of self. Such a mind would be affrighted easily, should there be prospects of the problem becoming a personal one with a possibility of undesirable effects to arise as a consequence. The question might readily assume great proportions to such a mind, and its importance be much exaggerated.

It would be difficult to persuade the man of narrow ideas and a small outlook on life, that there are very few questions of vital importance in a sense of their having a universal effect on humanity as a whole. There are innumerable problems constantly arising that must be

settled as they come up, but taken all in all, their bearing on the progress of the world and the destiny of the universe is practically negligible. They assume large proportions because small minds consider them, and do not see their littleness compared with the greater scheme of life. The problem of problems is to acquire that mind which sees all questions, great or small, in their true light; is not frightened by the sinister aspect of any of them; and is able to pass cool, seasoned judgment upon them all.

MAY 20, 1913.

WOMAN

THERE is a song which is sung by men, more particularly younger men, in subdued tones and with a hint of awe and a tinge of romantic feeling. The chorus ends, "And I learned about women from her." The song purports to relate the experience of a man who travels to various wild and half-civilized lands through the globe and what happens to the poor fellow whenever he meets with one of the gentler sex. The unexpected always happens to him, and he is proven to have a woeful lack of discernment in gauging a woman. However, as the chorus emphatically indicates, he progresses. His experience seems to be his sole educator, so that we presume, if

the song only lasts long enough, we may confidently expect to find in him, at last, a superb judge of all womankind.

The hint of mystery and the hushed notes of awe which accompany the rendition of the song are the factors which compel for it a more than ordinary interest. The old, old idea of the Eternal Feminine, the baffling mystery of the ages, provides the theme, and mere man eagerly imbibes with a thirsty soul, and gives it forth in reverent, low tones of awe. And so the song is a success.

This sense of mystery and unreality thrown about woman is simply the outgrowth in man of his passionate desire to worship at the shrine of the unknown and inexplicable. It is man who makes woman mysterious. Not to understand a woman is the principal reason for being really interested in her. What is un-

known is baffling to the senses, and a constant spur to the imagination. Hence the natural sequence of clothing the opposite sex in a garb of mystery and worshiping at her shrine. And the ladies, God bless them, are wise enough to keep quiet and get away with it.

JUNE 26, 1913.

SELF-CONTROL

THERE is a proverb of the Japanese which states that he who has conquered himself is greater than he who has conquered ten thousand men. This expresses in a nutshell the secret of success, the real success, which means the individual development of character to the greatest point. Whether financial or social success has been achieved is beside the question. The truly successful man is he who has mastered his own destiny and who rules his life and all his actions by means of his will power. Such a man respects himself and commands the respect of those about him. The force of his self-developed character is a living, vital thing and makes itself felt wher-

ever he is present. Knowing the power he possesses over himself, he feels an immense confidence and strength in dealing with other people. Problems which would completely floor a weaker character possess no terrors for him. He attacks them with pleasure, and is never so happy as when engaged in mastering them, nor so filled with satisfaction as when he has been successful.

But his greatest satisfaction is in knowing that he has conquered himself and is master of his own soul. No material failures or discouragements can darken such a man's life, nor can criticism, nor the dislike of his enemies mar the content in his heart. Come what may, he looks out on life unafraid, cheerfully, and with a clear conscience, because he knows he has won the greatest battle of all. The proportion of one to

ten thousand is about correct in estimating the number of men who have achieved this greatest of all successes. The difficulty of gaining control over one's own inclinations, desires, and general habits is extremely great. It is still harder to force one's self to conform to a certain life dictated by the mind. The latter is impossible unless the primary control over the body be accomplished. This can only be done by a system of slow daily training, requiring infinite patience and a fundamental mental determination never to cease trying. The greatest obstacles in the path are, first, the instinctive desire in every man to follow the line of least resistance; in other words, laziness. And second, the natural antipathy to giving up long-established modes of living. Moreover, there is often the fear of offending society

by apparently refusing to live in accordance with its dictates or conventions. That is, a man fears what his neighbor will say or think. It takes a great amount of courage and will power to surmount all three obstacles, but it is possible if the primary mental determination is strong enough completely to dominate the mind. The slower daily efforts which follow, bring about the gradual but ever-increasing influx of strength, which accumulates as latent power. The will power grows by each little successful domination over a bodily impulse, just as, conversely, it weakens each time the latter conquers. The time must come, therefore, when the man finds that he can successfully control his own actions, and is absolutely master of himself.

The further development of character

to its highest efficiency will follow as a matter of course, for the man who has within himself the strength to rule himself will not be content until he has brought out all his inward capabilities. And his greatest blessing is his own intense satisfaction in having fought and won a great battle.

JULY 8, 1913.

SELF-ESTEEM

A BROAD-MINDED man is rarely an egotist. Breadth of vision and personal conceit are incompatible. For he who thinks at all must sooner or later realize what a small place he occupies in the scheme of things. First of all, it must be perceived that we had nothing whatsoever to do with our being here. We do not know how we happen to be existing, or why. We had no responsibility in the matter. Our first remembrance of personal consciousness is buried in the vague haze of long ago, and there is absolutely no idea of a starting-place. We simply have to accept the fact that we are and that we now possess a personal and individual consciousness.

If we happen to be born wealthy, it is of no merit in itself. Nor are we to reckon ourselves of more or less importance because of the race or color with which we find ourselves aligned. Whether we are born black or white or yellow, is not of our choosing. While a man may consider himself fortunate that he happened to be created a member of the most progressive and most highly developed race, yet he has no reason to consider himself, because of that birth, entitled to any especial merit. Pride of family and race is legitimate and wholesome, but is often carried too far. Then it is necessary to reflect on the chance happening of individual creation, and arrogance and great pride must needs vanish.

If, then, we were not responsible for coming into the world, we have as little to do with the magnificent body which

we find we possess. We can learn a great deal in connection with its physical structure by study and work, but there is none of us who can construct a new one, although we have at hand all the essential chemical constituents. The body has reached its present state of perfection (perfect in every particular with the one exception of a complete mind, which nature has left for mankind itself eventually to achieve) after millions of years of slow, difficult growth, in which experiment after experiment must have been tried. In its last greatest stage, a perfect body, we find ourselves intrenched. And we call it "our body," although we ourselves had not the slightest part in its construction. We simply happen to be within it, and neither know whence "we" came to occupy it, nor who created, in the first place, that thing which

we call "self," the soul in command of the body. There are two things, therefore, which must considerably reduce any aspect which we might have of our own importance — first, that we have nothing to do with being alive as far as we know; and, second, that the body within which we exist has come into our possession through no efforts of our own, is beyond any power we have to duplicate, and is certainly more than the isolated consciousness we call "self" would seem to deserve.

To further reduce the bump of self-esteem the following method is excellent. It consists in taking a walk on a bright, starry night and the expenditure of a short time in gazing up into the heavens. As we contemplate the vast number of stars which meet our gaze and concentrate our thoughts in speculating about

them, it is only a short time before we realize the smallness and insignificance of our own individual selves. We can select practically any star in the heavens, and know that it is a prodigious sun, compared to which our own giver of light is but a pygmy. We know that each one of these suns is the center of a solar system, surrounded presumably by planets like those around our sun. We are aware, also, of the immense distance existing not only between the earth and each star, but between the individual suns. Further than that it is undoubtedly the case that the visible universe is but an infinitely small portion of creation. Beyond our universe, there are unending solar systems of which we can form no conception whatever. It is a vista of worlds presented to the mind's eye which makes the imagination stagger. The im-

mensity of boundless space is equally difficult to picture or comprehend. If, then, we rightly judge our earth as a mere bubble in the sea of cosmos, what must we consider our own importance in the scheme of infinite creation? We surely have little occasion to look upon ourselves with the pride of conceit. The essential thing is to realize that we are simply souls created by a divine and inexplicable power for a certain, definite purpose which our finite mind interprets as a struggle to attain character — both individually and as a people. If we perceive that we are definitely related to the great plan of existence, however small a part we may play in that scheme, then we possess the proper perspective, and our view of it is broad and wholesome. Self-esteem is then quite impossible.

JULY 22, 1913.

NATIONAL CHARACTER AS REVEALED BY THE NEWSPAPERS

THE most important news of today, in the estimation of one newspaper, is apparent in the huge black headline, "Thaw Baby Ill." What an impression the reading of this important news item would have on a highly cultured and educated foreigner. We trust he would read other papers before forming an opinion of the American people. And yet this paper caters to a class comprising the largest percentage of our citizens. If, then, it is true that the newspapers merely reflect their readers' minds in giving to them what they demand, we are forced to a sad conclusion regarding the largest element of our national make-up. It indicates a low order of

mental culture to be interested only in the sensational or in the superficial and commonplace. Yet this newspaper is saturated with items of this kind, while exaggeration permeates its sheets. The readers devour with avidity, and after perusal, believe they have really read the news of the day. Ignorance, credulity, and stupidity all belong to readers of this paper. And yet we hear many wise men say, "Let the people rule"; forgetting the people are on quite a lower stratum of intelligence than themselves. The trouble is that only a small minority of our citizens are energetic enough to use even fifty per cent of the brain power of which they are capable. The rest drift along on a working basis of fifteen per cent, or less, and the latter are "the people," and read the yellow newspapers.

AUGUST 29, 1913.

THE DIVINE SPARK

THERE are natures in which the capacity to feel the genuine and finer emotions of life is limited. To suffer vicariously is an indication of a highly developed character, and denotes a spirit in which unselfishness and human sympathy are the strongest and deepest qualities. On the other hand, there are persons who are seldom if ever roused or stirred at heart, and such people we characterize as being cold and callous. Untouched by the sorrow of others, unsympathetic and hard of heart, they seem to wind a way through life, an object of concern to those nearest them, and of secret pity to others. Some of them are hypocritical, avowing a sym-

pathy and warmness of heart which they are far from feeling. These are cowardly for they are brainy enough to understand the great place which a true heart holds in the community and to comprehend the virtues of sympathetic qualities, and are therefore loath to be found wanting by those with whom they come in contact. They therefore act, and fool no one. For what is genuine is always instantly recognized. Spirits commune much more readily and expeditiously than is ever appreciated. Two persons talk to each other, but in the course of the conversation each individual spirit is probing and plumbing and sizing up the other. Each places the other before the outward surface talk has finished. Hence the hypocrite, pretending to the deeper emotions of the heart, is quickly detected.

And there are others, who are sincere, frankly admitting the charge of being incapable of feeling such emotions, and further confessing much concern and distress at discovering the fact.

Such a person observes on every hand the broad play of spiritual emotion throughout humanity, and genuinely envies his fellow mortals who possess hearts, while there is a lamentable absence of one, apparently, as far as he is concerned.

In the latter case the probability is strong that the nature is as yet unawakened — that the spiritual qualities have not received as yet the necessary stimulus to action. There are men whose nature or personality is so deep that only the greatest appeal is effective. The soul slumbers on day after day, the summers speed by, and life apparently holds no

meaning. Then comes a sudden great shock, a mighty call out of the unknown, an appeal so great that the soul is shaken to the very depths, and the heart responds with the first true and real emotion. Such an awakening may come in any form, the voice of a tiny child confiding its baby secrets, or the thrilling notes of a martial song, or the passionate, vibrant words of a great speaker demanding the lives of his fellow men in service for a great cause. When the nature, by whatever means, is genuinely appealed to, the heart instantly responds. The slow, heavy nature may go years before the necessary stimulus appears, but the capacity to feel is there all the time.

Such people, frankly confessing a doubt as to whether or not they really possess a heart, need feel no distress, for

they can rest assured that the Divine Spirit resides in all, and that it sleeps but temporarily within them.

Those, however, who pretend to what they do not feel are in real danger. The constant simulation of the genuine dwarfs the nature and so atrophies the spirit that the divine spark is well-nigh buried beneath an ugly, false, and unnatural growth. The goodness of the Infinite is shown, however, in the fact that even in such natures the divine spark never goes quite out.

SEPTEMBER 14, 1913.

IMMORTALITY

SIR OLIVER LODGE has delivered an address which has attracted considerable attention among thinking people. He submits as his fundamental contention the assertion that personality persists beyond the grave. After outlining the reasons for his belief, he ends with a plea for more serious consideration of what is usually designated as the "occult."

Although it seems problematical, indeed, whether or not any genuine progress will ever be made in the realm of pure psychical research, yet there is every reason for accepting his primary assertion, that life continues after death. It is only ignorance and egotism which

can dictate the contrary belief that death ends all. To assert such a belief is to assume a knowledge of infinite extent which is both paradoxical and absurd. Frankly to admit an utter lack of understanding in regard to the matter, is logical and sane, even though such a course stamps one as somewhat lacking in imagination. There are many agnostics through sheer laziness.

To deny immortality simply indicates a mind which has little conception of itself, to say nothing of the vast surrounding universe. There are an infinitude of facts observable through life which are inexplicable — even by the greatest scientists. The relation of pure thought to the internal mechanism of the mind, with its consequent reactions, is, as yet, an unsolved riddle. The emotions generated, apparently near the heart,

are an object of unsuccessful study by physiologists. The force of will power or the qualities of courage and self-confidence are all characteristics of personality which are but little understood. In the wider field of the great world of nature, there are countless mysteries into which the mind of man is just beginning to delve.

In other words, why should any one man, knowing so little in regard to his own personality and so very little in regard to what surrounds him, set himself up as qualified to assert his disbelief in a life beyond that apparent to his senses. As man's mind is finite, so is his capacity to understand life finite and limited. The knowledge of infinity is possible only to the Infinite. The finite can only hazard a guess that infinity alone can explain the inexplicable. If we were infinite, we

should know whence came our universe, why we live, and what is our future destiny. Being finite, we can only speculate, but we can at least use common sense, and appreciate that there must be a Great Intelligence in charge of both ourselves and that great world of which our knowledge is so meager and limited. The fact of a living personality is no less a marvel than the dream of a future life.

SEPTEMBER 15, 1913.

THE PANORAMA OF OUR THOUGHTS

IF we were to have presented before us, on a screen, an exact reproduction, in panoramic form, of our thoughts for one day, we should probably be highly amazed. Not only that, but we should also be inclined, no doubt, to blush, or to be indignant and unbelieving. And last, but not least, we should probably view with great distress the utterly illogical and disconnected ideas which follow one after another in chronological sequence. We wake to find it raining, and picture wearing soft cap and raincoat to business. Then follows a picture of Ouimet playing golf on a wet links, and then of an English editorial

claiming Ouimet won the championship from Ray and Vardon because he so thoroughly knew the course at the Country Club, and then a picture of what such a whimpering English sportsman must look like. Then we have the whole English nation flitting before our eyes, — flitting because at this exact moment a subconscious impulse lands us squarely out of bed. And now floats before the mind's eye a beautiful picture of a luscious cantaloupe which we hope will start the breakfast, and a newspaper glides in behind. Who won the game? — and baseball holds the limelight. Quickly changing the scene, we speculate upon the football situation, and in a few seconds have reviewed two entire past seasons, and are just at the moment wondering whether or not coaching is, in the last analysis, the true explanation of a

successful team, when we find ourself at breakfast. Glimpsing the paper, a marvelous shifting and a kaleidoscopic changing of pictures ensue. We see the Interstate Commerce Commission delivering its severe reprimand to the New Haven, and all the past wrecks emerge in a swoop while we remember a ride on the Merchants' Limited, and especially recall the absence of any fear we then experienced. And then, old friend Harry Thaw obtrudes, but his personality quickly fades as we ponder over the whole legal procedure in his case, especially the flock of habeas corpuses which flit about him. This speculation brings the thought that, as a matter of fact, we are shamefully ignorant in regard to courts and assizes and probates and various other legal subjects, and that we ought to

make an effort to become better informed, and presto! — How about night school? To study law? But we decide with regret that this is not possible just at present. (Nor ever will be — descends a secret little thought way down into the subconscious mind.)

Thus do our thoughts shift and change and reappear in different forms, until at last we get down to the actual business of the day, when we concentrate upon that before us which demands real thinking. And upon the ability so to hold and concentrate the thoughts, success in accomplishing tangible results depends. The mind is a state of constantly shifting fields of consciousness. So quick and varied are the changes that in the panorama of a few hours a most confusing and apparently unrelated array of ideas is presented. We

know, however, that every thought is associated with its predecessor in some way, though lightning-like changes make it difficult to perceive the direct connections. We have the faculty, however (strongly developed in some), of holding the thoughts concentrated upon one predominating idea, and the strength of this faculty determines whether or not we are sound thinkers. Any one can float all day in a maze of dreams and ideas, but it takes a strong mind to solve the problems of life. The pity is that we so dislike the effort necessary to concentrate. As Helen Keller says, "The thinking of most people is infantile."

SEPTEMBER 30, 1913.

THE SPIRIT'S FORM

TO look at the world from a materialistic viewpoint is inane, showing both lack of imagination and reasoning power. A man possessed of good eyesight does not put on smoked glasses to view a gorgeous sunset. Why should any one, then, voluntarily assume the gross and ugly spectacles of materialism in viewing the handiwork of nature as revealed in humanity? It is so self-evident that we are spirits, dealing with spirits. If the cynical disbeliever in religion sneers at the word "spirit," call it "mind." At all odds, we understand perfectly that something within us is the actual self, the ego, and the veriest cynic must admit it. The question of what

that self is has caused numberless volumes of philosophy and psychology to fill our libraries. We simply call it spirit, and think of it as our real self. The body shelters it, and has no other value.

On all sides are kindred spirits. In everyday life, spirit deals with spirit, words simply serving a convenient means of exchange, while faces are masks pure and simple. When one man prevails upon another to his wishes, it is a case of a stronger spirit dominating a weaker. The actual words have nothing to do with the case. A thrilling speaker sways a great audience, not through fine gestures, nor beautiful expression, but through the magnetism of personality, which is spirit. All humanity is simply spirit personified, and matter, in the form of body, is merely one of nature's devices made necessary by the particular

circumstances and complexion of this particular dwelling-spot in the universe. Spirits are alike throughout creation, because the essence of each is the same identical spark of Divinity which produced the whole scheme of things. Therefore, to worry over the actual appearance of a "spirit" in the next world is simply childish, for when that chapter opens we shall find things very much as at present — we shall still know, with the same certainty, that we are spirits or souls or minds, and that around us are exactly the same, differing only in quality. The material covering of that inner self bears no significance whatsoever.

DECEMBER 15, 1913.

THE UNIVERSE OF THE MIND

THE mind is a great universe in which ideas and thoughts are stars. It is infinite in extent, and unlimited in capacity to absorb knowledge, except by the one circumstance of physical endurance for concentration. If we were perfect machines, needing neither rest nor repairs, and were granted sufficient time, we could acquire a knowledge of any chosen subject which would absolutely amaze us. Those who have spent years of research upon a subject know the value of daily concentration. They realize how readily the mind absorbs new ideas, and tabulates the thoughts in accordance with their relation to the

subject-matter. The more intense the concentration, the more receptive proves the mind, and the keener in its analyzing power. There is no limit to brain capacity in itself. The mind is ours and will serve us to the furthest extent of our wishes. But unless we have the determination to make it serve our purposes, it is simply a potential power, lying unconsidered at our door. The mind can achieve nothing unless it be controlled and directed by the spirit behind it. This spirit we sometimes call will power. Whatever its designation, the fact remains that mind responds to a spiritual force and does its bidding. If the spirit is strong, determined, and unyielding, the mind will bring to pass the object sought. The ability, for example, to acquire a new language is possessed by all of us, and our doing so depends entirely upon

the strength of our determination to accomplish the feat. The will power behind the mind decides its greatness or smallness. A healthy mind can be made a powerful instrument. Whether or not it is made one, rests with the spirit by which it is controlled.

DECEMBER 26, 1913.

THE END

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